

## **Consultation – Proposal to remove Passenger Assistants from Langwathby School Transport routes**

Link to full consultation document:

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/Langwathby-school-transport>

### **Frequently Asked Questions : Home to School Transport**

We understand that you may be worried by the consultation proposal and to support this, we have pulled together some responses to queries we understand parents/carers may have, to date. Additional questions raised during the consultation period will be responded to on an individual basis.

***Following the consultation drop-in session at Langwathby Village Hall on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 4pm – 6.30pm, where additional questions have been raised with some commonality by attendees, these have been incorporated into the end of this document. The FAQ's are not intended to be a detailed list of points raised by individuals attending the drop-in session, but to try to answer common questions under general themes.***

***These will also be published on the council's website on the consultation page.***

### **Safeguarding**

#### **Are all transport personnel DBS cleared**

Yes – in order to work on home to school contracts all staff have enhanced clearance through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) for children's or children's and adult's workforce. All cleared staff are issued with a Westmorland and Furness Council ID Badge. If there is going to be a delay with a badge issue, a clearance letter will be issued which should be kept on the driver and passenger assistant at all times.

#### **What Safeguarding training do transport personnel carry out**

Passenger assistants on all SEND routes and the T1252 and T1255 Langwathby routes are required to do the Spectrum on-line training which includes safeguarding modules.

#### **What other safeguarding training/information is available**

Periodic supplier engagement sessions are held between the Integrated Home to School Transport Team and transport contractors. Refresher training is provided on Safeguarding processes, referral and roles and responsibilities. All contractors have contact details of LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) and the Safeguarding Hub

The Council produce a leaflet "Safeguarding passengers on council transport" and this is given to all staff who are cleared to work on council contracts. It is a mandatory requirement for all transport personnel to have training provided by their employer and have a copy of this leaflet on board their vehicle at all times.

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/schools-and-education/apply-school-transport/who-responsible-organising-school-transport>

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### **What compliance checks does the council carry out?**

An annual compliance audit is carried out by the Integrated Home to School Transport Team and covers all aspects of vehicle, licensing, training requirements.

On-site inspections take place periodically at schools served by contracted home to school transport. At these inspections, the team have a checklist which is completed and includes transport personnel wearing their Council ID or having their clearance letter on their person.

### **How many safeguarding incidents have been reported by school or transport providers and followed up by the Home to School Transport Team for mainstream, primary transport?**

Three over the period 2023/24; 2024/25 academic years. For confidentiality reasons no further details can be provided.

### **How does the driver know who to hand the child over to on the afternoon journey**

Consistency of drivers is encouraged, however there are occasion when this may not be possible.

It expected that when parents leave their children at the pick-up point in the morning, that if there is someone different collecting in the afternoon that the driver should be advised of this.

### **How does my child know where to get off the bus in the afternoon**

It is expected that parents/carers prepare their child for travelling on home to school transport. When bus passes are issued, parents/carers are given the contact details of the company providing the transport so that they can establish the pick-up/drop off locations and times. As part of this preparation, parents/carers should make sure their child knows which is their bus stop.

The driver should also know which are new children and be mindful of where their stop is using the passenger lists provided by the Council which have the names of the children and their boarding/alighting point for the driver to reference.

As set out in the Councils “Behaviour on home to school/college transport” leaflet which is issued with the bus pass, parents/carers are expected to ensure that young children are met when the transport returns from school.

Driver would never leave a child unattended at a bus stop. They would wait, and if necessary, drop other children off at their stops, then return to the child’s stop or return the child to school. We have no reported instances of a young child being left unattended.

## **Training and Clearance**

### **What standards are expected of home to school contractors and staff**

Only companies which meet the required standards as set out on the Council’s Procurement Portal, “The Chest” are able to bid for contracts through our Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS)

### **Are transport staff first aid trained?**

First Aid training is not provided by the local authority but the DPS contract does require that Drivers and Passenger Assistants must have completed basic first aid training provided by the Operator. and any other first aid related training required as may be specified by the Authority acting reasonably.”

There may be a requirement for staff to be trained on SEND routes, depending on the individual pupils transported and their individual medical needs. Where the community nursing team determines that training is required (usually for administration of epilepsy medication) there may be a requirement for transport personnel to have basic life saving training on a case by case basis

### **What qualifications do drivers of minibuses and smaller vehicles hold**

Drivers of taxis or private hire vehicles (up to 16 passenger seats) are required to pass the requirements of the licensing authority in which they operate to be cleared as a taxi or private hire driver.

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/licensing/taxi-and-private-hire-licensing>

### **What qualifications do drivers of larger vehicles hold**

Vehicles larger than 17 seats will either be operated under a PSV Operator (“O”) License, or a Section 19 large bus permit. Anyone driving a vehicle with more than 17 passenger seats is required to hold a category D driving license. This requires both a theory and driving test, separate and in addition to that which is required to drive a car (category B license), and a medical at first issue.

Vocational drivers holding either a Category D or D1 license must also hold a Driver CPC Card (Certificate of Professional Competence) and carry out 35 hours of

periodic training every 5 years. There is statutory guidance published by the DVSA which sets out the CPC syllabus. It should be noted that there is an exception to this however for drivers who gained their vocational license before 10 September 2008. Industry good practice however means that most drivers do hold the CPC

### **Are medicals required for drivers of home to school transport routes**

This depends on the size and type of vehicle. Anyone driving a vehicle over 17 passenger seats must hold a Category D license and a PCV or PSV D4 medical is required at first issue of a provisional Cat D License, this ensures that drivers meet the DVLA Group 2 medical standards. Periodic medicals are required at intervals determined by the driver's age.

Medical standards required for drivers of coaches and buses are higher than those required for car drivers due to the fact that they are dealing with larger vehicles, which carry additional risks than usual car driving.

There are a number of medical conditions which will preclude people who drive a car, from driving a bus or a coach. The vocational license is medically highly regulated and also includes eyesight requirements. In the case of a driver developing a medical condition, or a medical issue being picked up at the formal medical, it is not unusual for a vocational driver to have their vocational license suspended until DVLA are comfortable of the drivers "fitness to drive."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/d4-medical-examiner-report-for-a-lorry-or-bus-driving-license>

**We have had no reported instances of drivers being incapacitated at the wheel.**

## **Health & Safety**

### **What risk assessments are in place for my child's transport?**

Contractors are required to carry out a risk assessment for each route that they operate under contract to Westmorland and Furness Council. This risk assessment should identify the risk, the location and the mitigation required to reduce the risk.

If a child has dedicated SEND transport in place, an individual transport risk assessment is carried out by the Council's Health & Safety Adviser. This identifies the risks to the child when on transport and the mitigations required to reduce the risk. SEND transport is currently commissioned by the EHCP coordinators in the SEND Team when the Council is directing a child to a specific educational establishment which meets their individual SEND need. The home to school transport policy applies in the first instance ie distance from school under the statutory walking distance criteria, SEND need is then considered.

### **What happens if there is a breakdown on the journey?**

The driver will follow the safety protocols as specified by their employer. In normal circumstances the expected course of action would be:

- Bring the vehicle to a stop at the safest place possible
- Deploy hazard warning lights
- Reassure the pupils on board what has happened
- Phone back to their office base for support
- Notify school and notify the Council's school transport Team (it is more usual that the driver's employer would do this)
- Keep the pupils on the vehicle and safe and await help.
- In the case of a RTA, follow the above procedure but also contact the Police

The only reason that pupils or passengers should leave the vehicle would be to transfer to a replacement vehicle, if the breakdown was in a dangerous place and the driver considered it the safest thing to move the pupils, or if the vehicle itself was considered to be an unsafe place to remain.

### **What happens if the driver becomes ill on the journey?**

The Council would expect the same protocol as a breakdown or an RTA to be followed by the driver. It would be highly unlikely that a driver suddenly became so incapacitated that they were unable to summon assistance and this situation has never, to our knowledge occurred.

### **How many incidents have the Home to School Transport Team been advised of, where primary aged mainstream children have been involved in an RTA?**

One in the period 2023/24; 2024/25 academic years

June 2024 5 pupils on an 8 seater vehicle. Driver clipped a wall when manoeuvring with children on board. No-one injured

## **On the Bus - Behaviour and Seatbelts**

### **What advice is given to parents/carers to support and promote good behaviour on home to school transport?**

When transport eligibility is confirmed and a bus pass issued, parents/carers receive a copy of the Council's Travel Safely and behaviour policy leaflets . This information is also available on the Council's website. It is expected that as part of the preparation for school, and travel on the school bus, that parents/carers take the time to talk through with their child what they need to do to keep safe

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/schools-and-education/apply-school-transport/who-responsible-organising-school-transport>

### **Who is responsible for securing my child's seatbelt?**

Children should be capable of securing their seatbelt and remaining seated at all times when on transport. Parents/carers are able to board the bus with their child(ren) in a morning to help them secure their seatbelt if necessary.

Unless specified as a requirement in a SEND child's transport risk assessment, neither the driver nor the passenger assistant would secure a seatbelt as this would be considered a safeguarding concern in physically touching the child. However, if a driver becomes aware that a seatbelt has been removed, they would be expected to verbally instruct the child to re-secure their seatbelt.

It is expected that as part of the preparation for school, and travel on the school bus, that parents/carers take the time to talk through with their child what they need to do to keep safe on transport, this being the same as they would if they were travelling in someone's car.

### **How is behaviour managed on mainstream transport?**

Schools, pupils, and parent/carers are expected to work together to help the Council and its operators to fulfil these roles. This includes the promotion of good behaviour.

If a concern is raised either by a child reporting to a parent/carer or member of school staff, or the driver observing poor behaviour, then the matter will be investigated. It is often the school that take the lead as they know the pupils best and can identify if there are underlying issues contributing to transport.

On some routes, a designated seating plan is arranged so that all pupils are clear where they should sit, and this can be particularly helpful when children are not getting along and may need to be separated.

Roles and responsibilities of transport personnel, schools and parents and carers are set out in the "Behaviour on home to school/college transport" leaflet which parents/carers receive and are expected to read and fully understand and discuss with their child when they are allocated a seat on transport.

### **What happens if there is persistent poor behaviour or bullying?**

If there is repeated poor behaviour or a specific incident which warrants temporary suspension then transport may be withdrawn. Thankfully, these occasions are rare.

There is an escalation process set out in the "Behaviour on home to school/college transport" leaflet, and this would see the operator, school and home to school transport team working together towards resolution.

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/schools-and-education/apply-school-transport/who-responsible-organising-school-transport>

### **How many serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying have there been on mainstream primary school transport?**

In the period 2023/24; 2024/25 academic years



June 2024: ongoing bullying on school transport and verbal abuse of transport personnel. Behaviour reminder letters sent to those involved. 21 pupils on a 24 seater. This was a vehicle which did have a passenger assistant on board.

September 2024: children caused damage to air vent on vehicle and were trying to distract the driver. One off incident. School and operator monitored behaviour. 7 pupils on an 8 seater vehicle.

## **Mainstream Primary Home to School Transport**

### **How many primary schools have home to school transport provided by Westmorland and Furness Council?**

There are 40 primary schools with transport routes procured and managed by Westmorland and Furness Council.

### **How many of these mainstream primary school routes have passenger assistants onboard?**

There are only two routes with passenger assistants provided on mainstream transport in the whole of Westmorland and Furness Council area.

These are the two routes serving Langwathby School.

### **What are the age range on other mainstream primary school transport routes?**

Reception (age 4) to year 6 (age 11).

There are also some school routes where we have joint transport serving primary and secondary schools so there are potentially children from reception up to year 11 or even Post 16 travelling together.

### **Are there any other mainstream primary routes which are similar in operation to the Langwathby routes?**

Yes. There are a number of routes, which operate in a similarly rurally geographic area, with similar numbers of pupils, vehicle size, and journey length.

Examples are:

39 pupils (age 4-11) travelling on a 70 seater coach for 3 miles taking 35 minutes

35 pupils (age 4 -18) travelling on a 36 seater coach for 7 miles taking 35 minutes

22 pupils (age 4-16) travelling on a 33 seater coach for 11.6 miles taking 30 minutes

22 pupils (age 4-11) travelling on a 39 seater coach for 5 miles taking 15 minutes

17 pupils (age 4-11) travelling on a 22 seater coach for 5.3 miles taking 15 minutes

21 pupils (age 4-11) travelling on a 21 seater coach for 11.4 miles taking 35 minutes

### **How will we get to see the findings of the consultation?**

We will be providing a summary consultation report which will be shared with all stakeholders at the end of the consultation period.

***Additional questions raised by attendees raised at the consultation drop-in session at Langwathby Village Hall on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 4pm – 6.30pm***

## **Safeguarding**

**I didn't receive a copy of the safeguarding leaflet when my child's bus pass was issued.**

Copies of all the Council's home to school transport leaflets can be found on the Westmorland and Furness Council website.

<https://www.westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk/schools-and-education/apply-school-transport/who-responsible-organising-school-transport>

**The safeguarding leaflet looks to be aimed at SEND transport. Should there also be safeguarding literature available for children to understand what they can expect on transport, what happens when you're new to transport, and what to do if you are worried about anything that happens on transport (from a child's perspective)**

The feedback is welcomed and this is something which could be further developed.

## **Training and Clearance**

**Is the job description of the drivers the same as "Stagecoach Drivers"**

Drivers are employed directly by the company holding the home to school contract and the council cannot comment on the job descriptions or duties carried out by individual companies.

## **Health & Safety**

**Will there be a review of health and safety procedures as a result of this consultation?**

In the event that there was any removal of the Passenger Assistants, this would be accompanied by a full and detailed risk assessment that would detail how all the risks raised by stakeholders would be mitigated.



The responsibility for the development and management of the risk assessments for the operation of routes lies with the transport operator who is contracted to deliver the service. The contracted transport operator is the owner of the risks and mitigations they put in place operationally to manage these risks. The route risk assessments will be reviewed as part of this consultation.

### **Has the Council's generic risk assessment from 2019/20 been updated?**

There have been significant personnel changes in the Council and the Council itself has changed significantly as a result of Local Government Reorganisation and the formation of Westmorland and Furness Council. As a result of the drop-in session on 16<sup>th</sup> October, the Council has been made aware of various documents and papers that is held by a member of the community. This information is to be shared with the School Governors and also the Council, for full review.

### **It's not safe for children to get off the bus into the road unaccompanied**

There is no expectation that children should be getting off the bus into the busy road. The bus should only be picking up and dropping off at agreed pick up points, and remains the responsibility of parents/carers to get their child to and from the pick up point safely.

### **What happens if the bus has to wait due to sheep on the road, cows crossing etc?**

This sort of event is a regular occurrence on rural home to school transport and as part of the preparation for travelling on the school bus, and associated behaviours, it is expected that parents/carers support their child in dealing with such situations.

### **The mobile phone signal is very patchy – what happens if there is an emergency?**

Across the council area, home to school transport operates in similarly rural areas. Where there are known mobile phone hotspots, transport operators would be expected to ensure that staff have access to mobile phones either with dual sims, or boosters to facilitate communication.

## **On the Bus - Behaviour and Seatbelts**

### **I don't know the children from other villages travelling on the bus, how is behaviour managed?**

Schools, pupils, and parent/carers are expected to work together to help the Council and its operators to fulfil these roles. This includes the promotion of good behaviour.

If a concern is raised either by a child reporting to a parent/carer or member of school staff, or the driver observing poor behaviour, then the matter will be investigated. It is often the school that take the lead as they know the pupils best and can identify if there are underlying issues contributing to transport.

On some routes, a designated seating plan is arranged so that all pupils are clear where they should sit, and this can be particularly helpful when children are not getting along and may need to be separated.

Roles and responsibilities of transport personnel, schools and parents and carers are set out in the "Behaviour on home to school/college transport" leaflet which parents/carers receive and are expected to read and fully understand and discuss with their child when they are allocated a seat on transport.

### **The behaviour policy seems to be aimed at Secondary age pupils**

It is written for pupils of all ages travelling on home to school transport. The feedback will be taken on board and the literature reviewed.

## **Mainstream Primary Home to School Transport**

### **Why is this being looked at now?**

Please refer to the consultation document. The formation of Westmorland and Furness Council has provided an opportunity to *review* policy and process across a number of service areas.

### **Can the potential cost savings be shared please?**

It is not appropriate to share the costs of transport provision.

## **Suggestions made by parents/carers**

### **If the decision is made to remove the passenger assistants, could the journey time be shortened?**

No decision has been made as to whether the passenger assistants will be removed or not. The journeys currently operate within the recommended journeys time of 45 minutes as specified by the Department for Education

### **Could parents/carers be on a rota to act as Passenger Assistants on the routes?**

No decision has been made as to whether the passenger assistants will be removed or not. The option of parent/carers acting as passenger assistants would require careful consideration as there would be safeguarding requirements through a DBS check; and insurance, public liability, health & safety implications as well as the management of the rota, and ensuring all on it, were able to act impartially.

### **Could parents/carers pay to have Passenger Assistants on the routes?**

No decision has been made as to whether the passenger assistants will be removed or not. Parents/carers paying for the passenger assistants would require careful consideration as some parents may want to contribute towards the cost and others many not. Any such arrangement would need to be managed carefully and locally, and the safeguarding, insurance, public liability, health & safety implications managed effectively.

**The consultation drop on 16<sup>th</sup> October in has limited attendance and I know of some people who would have liked to attend but couldn't make it.**

There will be an additional opportunity between 8am and 6pm on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October for parents/carers to book onto a slot with Officers from The Integrated Home to School Transport Team to share feedback either via MS Teams or a phone call. To participate, please email [school.transport@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk](mailto:school.transport@westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk)

**Could the routes be combined and only 1 passenger assistant provided?**

The geography of the routes does not appear to lend itself to this option, however it an option which can be explored.

**What is the age limit for public service transport?**

The guidance is issued by different bus companies and varies slightly. The Langwathby routes, as other contracted home to school transport where the general public are unable to travel are classed as “closed door” services.

**Could a trial period be put in place without passenger assistants on board – if there are issues, could they be reinstated?**

No decision has been made as to whether the passenger assistants will be removed or not. This suggestion will be noted as part of the consultation feedback.

## **School Staff and Governors**

**Have staff at school and governors been advised that they can respond to the consultation openly?**

Yes, they have been given advice as to how they can respond.

Langwathby Consultation FAQ's v2 finalised 22.10.2025